



August 20, 2014

Mr. Ramon Trias  
Planning and Zoning Director  
City of Coral Gables  
427 Biltmore Way  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

**Re: Shoma Park Tower - 1500 Venera Avenue / Statement of Use and Justification**

Dear Mr. Trias:

On behalf of Sunset Place Luxury Holdings, LLC, (the "Applicant"), we respectfully submit this statement of use and justification in connection with the enclosed Planning Division Application (the "Application"). The Applicant proposes to construct a mixed use development named "Shoma Park Tower" (the "Project"), which will be located at 1500 Venera Avenue (the "Property"). The Property is approximately 29,802 square feet/0.6842 acre and is located in Section 14 of the City's Riviera subdivision. The Property currently contains a two-story residential structure with surface parking and very limited amenities.

The Applicant is requesting approval to construct a 65 unit mixed-use residential development on the Property with ground floor retail space. The Applicant proposes to:

1. Amend the City's Future Land Use Map from Residential Multi-Family Medium to Commercial Mid-Rise by submitting a small scale land use plan map amendment application;
2. Amend the City's Zoning Map and rezone the Property from Multi-Family 2 (MF2) to Commercial; and
3. Submit a mixed-use site plan / conditional use application.

Shoma Park Tower is designed in the classical Coral Gables Mediterranean style of architecture begun by George Merrick. The Project will provide various amenities, including a rooftop pool oasis and ground level uses to activate the public realm consisting of fitness and spa

areas, offices, commercial/retail/restaurant space, large sidewalks and a palm tree grove overlooking one of Coral Gables' premier neighborhood parks, Riviera Park.

### **SITE CONTEXT**

The Property lies in an area of the City at the edge of the bustling City of South Miami's "downtown" shopping and entertainment area. It is a transition zone between taller commercial and mixed uses to the north, northwest, west, and south and residential neighborhoods to the east. Located in the middle of the Riviera Section #14 between the residential neighborhoods to the east and the proposed Project is Riviera Park. Riviera Park is a large, three-acre municipal park which serves as a well-planned buffer, separating the high commercial uses located on the western side of the park from the residential areas on the eastern side. Riviera Park will be a desirable amenity for residents of Shoma Park Tower with its walking trails, dog friendly features and scenic picnic areas. The park contains tall, mature trees that surround the park property and further buffer the commercial areas to the north, south and west.

The Property is bounded on the north by Venera Avenue and on the east by Yumuri Street. The Property currently contains a two-story residential structure, with a similar 3-story building directly to the south called the Villa San Remo Condominium. These two existing sites form a residential "pocket" in a heavily commercial area which is no longer consistent with the taller buildings around it. The development located to the west of the Property is Plaza San Remo Condominium, a very large mixed use commercial structure that contains a Whole Foods market on the first floor. Across San Remo Street to the south is another large office building which is owned by Baptist Health South Florida. On the north side of Venera Avenue are mid-rise office buildings and south of Riviera Park on Yumuri Street is a large, five story assisted living facility. Numerous other mid and high rise structures are found in the vicinity, especially to the north, west, and south.

### **DETAILS OF PROJECT**

The proposed Project will consist of a single self-contained building, which will be nine stories (97 feet tall) and will contain 65 dwelling units. The ground floor will be generously set back from Venera Avenue on the north and Yumuri Street to the east, which will allow room for ample sidewalks and a covered arcade walkway on these two sides. In addition, there will be a covered entrance feature on the northeast corner of the building and a palm "grove" set in decorative pavement on the east side. On-street parking will be provided on both the north and east sides. A pull-through loading bay will be provided on the north side of the property which will allow these service functions to take place internally and away from the public street.

The ground floor of the building will be used for the residents' amenities and building support facilities including a meeting/social room, kitchen, fitness area, and spa as well as commercial building functions such as the lobby, manager's office, mailroom, and utility rooms. In addition, the entire east side of the Project's ground floor facing Riviera Park will contain commercial space for a possible restaurant use with a view of the Park. With the Park across the street as a back drop and the palm grove setting, Shoma Park Tower creates an active pedestrian experience for residents and visitors to the area. Shoma Park Tower and its "Central Park-like" atmosphere will be a connecting link and pedestrian corridor between the highly dense commercial areas to the west and the park and low rise residential to the east.

### **BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

The Application has been prepared and filed with the intent of bringing a new mixed use project with 65 residential units to Riviera Section #14, a mostly commercial area of the City which borders on the City of South Miami's shopping and entertainment area. The Project will benefit the surrounding area by bringing in residents that will utilize the existing businesses. Additionally, due to the close proximity to these businesses, no car is needed taking vehicle trips off the roadways. For example, Shoma Park Tower will be located right next door to Whole Foods, where the residents can walk to get their daily groceries. The quality of life (and work) in the City has propelled demand for both multifamily residential and high end commercial uses in close proximity to work, pedestrian friendly areas, and parks. The Project will help address this demand.

At the same time that the Project brings new growth and excitement to this area of the City, the Project will honor and promote George Merrick's legacy of design. The Project will be designed with Mediterranean architecture reaffirming George Merrick's original vision for the City's design, look and lifestyle. The Applicant and Project architect are fully dedicated to the quality of the Project's design and construction. The elevations as currently proposed will include a beautiful Mediterranean design, ornate architectural features and very high quality materials. Another benefit to the City and the residents and neighbors around Shoma Park Tower, is that the Project will incorporate pedestrian amenities that will create a pedestrian friendly corridor around the Project allowing residents and visitors to connect to the commercial uses to the west, north and south.

The City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code seek to preserve the City's predominantly residential character by concentrating dense commercial uses in certain areas and protecting residential uses by incorporating buffers or by transitioning less intense uses closer to low rise residential. This is precisely what Shoma Park Tower will do. Besides Riviera Park, the Project will serve as an additional buffer of protection for the residential areas to the east, as it will be a very beneficial transition project to the commercial areas to the west.

The Project is consistent and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, as the area contains mixed use developments with similar heights, densities and intensities. The Project is requesting an amendment to the Future Land Use Map to change it from Residential Multi-Family Medium to Commercial Mid-Rise. The Residential Multi-Family Medium designation allows buildings up to a maximum height of 70 feet and a density of 40 units per acre. An examination of the Future Land Use Map for this area shows that only this Property and its neighbor to the south form a small pocket of residential land use bounded by Commercial to the north, west and south and Parks and Recreation to the east. Amending the Future Land Use Map to Commercial Mid-Rise which permits buildings up to 70 feet tall (or up to 97 feet with architectural incentives) and a maximum floor area ratio of 3.0 (3.5 with architectural incentives), will allow Shoma Park Tower to be built, provide the benefits enumerated above to the City and residents, and achieve the architectural features, pedestrian friendly amenities including large sidewalks, plazas and commercial public space that the City envisions with redevelopment urban infill projects. This change will be consistent with the surrounding area, as the majority of the surrounding areas already have commercial land use and zoning designations.

#### **FUTURE LAND USE MAP AMENDMENT STANDARDS**

The Applicant is requesting a Future Land Use Map amendment to Commercial for the Property which will make the land use designation consistent with most of the nearby land. Pursuant to Section 3-1506 of the City's Zoning Code, Shoma Park Tower satisfies the standards for Comprehensive Plan Map Amendments as follows:

1. Shoma Park Tower specifically advances several objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Shoma Park Tower will strengthen and enhance the City as a vibrant community with a mix of uses including residential, office and commercial (Goal FLU-1). The Project is being designed as a residential mid-rise tower with first floor active uses including a fitness and spa area and commercial/retail/restaurant space. Being across the street from Riviera Park creates a "Central Park" feel and provides neighbors, residents and visitors with a desirable place to work, live and play. Shoma Park Tower will also create an infill redevelopment project which will discourage urban sprawl and encourage the reuse of underutilized parcels (Objective FLU-1.7). The project will replace an older, underutilized residential apartment building with a beautiful Mediterranean designed mixed use development close to employment centers, shopping and recreational parks. Shoma Park Tower's high quality, creative design and compatible site planning will bring new energy and excitement to this area of the City while reaffirming George Merrick's original vision for Coral Gables' design, look and lifestyle (Objective DES-1.1). The Project promotes mixed use development providing housing and commercial services near employment centers, thereby reducing the need to drive (Policy MOB 1.1.1). Shoma Park Tower is less than a block away from a Whole Foods grocery store, steps

away from Riviera Park and a few blocks away from the City's commercial uses and Sunset Place, a large commercial mixed use entertainment and shopping facility. With its generous sidewalks, large setbacks and covered arcades along Venera Avenue and Yumuri Street, the active pedestrian experience around the project encourages walking instead of driving. Shoma Park Tower contains a balance of mixed uses, housing and open space, which will promote pedestrian activity and provide for specific commitments to design excellence and long term economic and cultural vitality.

2. Shoma Park Tower is internally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as further described in paragraphs 1 – 5 of this section.

3. Shoma Park Tower will dramatically improve the level of service of public infrastructure around the Project, as the surrounding entire area will benefit from the new urban infill Project, including redesigned and constructed sidewalks and upgraded water and sewer service. Based on the concurrency impact statement submitted with the previous DRC application, the Project meets and/or exceeds the level of service and satisfies concurrency. Additionally, the Project is designed as a pedestrian friendly development which encourages residents and visitors to leave their automobiles behind and walk to and from this beautiful development to the commercial projects to the west or to the Riviera Park to the east.

4. Shoma Park Tower will not have any adverse effect on environmental resources. The Property is an urban infill site which currently houses a two story older apartment building.

5. Shoma Park Tower is a mixed use development with uses such as residential, office and commercial. Within the mix of uses there will be many amenities for the residents including a fitness center and spa, a rooftop pool and a meeting/social room with full kitchen facilities. Additionally, there will be a large commercial / retail / restaurant space located on the east side of the ground floor level facing the beautiful park. These uses will provide residents and guests of the City with services that are close to their residences, employment and entertainment. The Project will create a live, work and play environment and opportunities for residents who want to live close to employment and commercial centers without the need for daily automobile use.

In order to create this beautiful, mixed use Mediterranean designed Project with large pedestrian friendly sidewalks and walkable streets, open spaces and amenities for residents, guests and the public, we are requesting a Future Land Use Map amendment to allow flexibility in density/intensity. This process allows the Project architect to create a sleeker, less massive building with amenities which will benefit the City and the neighborhood at large.



## **REZONING STANDARDS**

The Property is located within the Multi-Family 2 (MF2) zoning district. The Property and its adjacent neighbor to the south form a small pocket of residentially zoned property in this area which is surrounded by either Commercial (C) or Parks and Recreation zoning. The Applicant is also requesting a rezoning of the Property to Commercial which will make it consistent with most of the other existing zoning in the area and will facilitate the density needed to construct the Shoma Park Tower project. Pursuant to Section 3-1404, the Applicant satisfies the standards for review of Applicant-initiated district boundary changes as follows:

**1. It is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan in that it:**

**a. *Does not permit uses which are prohibited in the future land use category of the parcel proposed for development.*** The proposed rezoning is from Residential Multi-Family 2 (MF2) to Commercial (C). The proposed use is a mixed use development consisting of residential, commercial and office uses. Simultaneously with the rezoning request, the Applicant is requesting a Future Land Use Map amendment to change the underlying land use designation on the Property from Residential Multi-Family Medium to Commercial Mid-Rise. The requested land use designation allows residential uses in a mixed use development. Therefore the land use, zoning and uses will be compatible.

**b. *Does not allow densities or intensities in excess of the densities and intensities which are permitted by the future land use category of the parcel proposed for development.*** The Commercial Mid-Rise land use designation allows a maximum floor area ratio of 3.5 and a height of 97 feet with architectural incentives. Shoma Park Tower will not exceed those parameters.

**c. *Will not cause a decline in the level of service for public infrastructure to a level of service which is less than the minimum requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.*** A Concurrency Impact Statement was previously issued for this project indicating compliance with all levels of service. As for traffic concurrency, the Project is located within the Gables Redevelopment Infill District (GRID), the City's traffic concurrency exception area.

**d. *Does not directly conflict with any objective or policy of the Comprehensive Plan.*** The Project will not directly conflict with any known Comprehensive Plan policy or objective, and will in fact, further or implement several of the objectives and policies, as detailed below.

**2. Will provide a benefit to the City in that it will achieve two or more of the following objectives:**

**a. *Improve mobility by reducing vehicle miles traveled for residents within a one-half (1/2) mile radius by:***

i. Balancing land uses in a manner that reduces vehicle miles traveled. Shoma Park Tower is a mixed use Project which includes ground floor commercial/retail/office uses which will be open to the public. This will allow building residents and neighbors to find needed goods and services within the Project and the neighborhood rather than having to travel by car to obtain them. In fact, the Project is adjacent to a Whole Foods market where residents can walk to get their daily groceries. This should help reduce vehicle miles traveled in the vicinity of this site. The increased density in the project will also help achieve this goal by concentrating more residents in this more urban area of the city.

ii. Creating a mix of uses that creates an internal trip capture rate of greater than twenty (20%) percent. Not applicable to this project.

iii. Increasing the share of trips that use alternative modes of transportation, such as transit ridership, walking, or bicycle riding. Higher urban densities such as will be facilitated by Shoma Park Tower help support mass transit, and in fact make it feasible. Walking and bicycle use will be encouraged by the mix of residential and commercial uses in the Project and by the provision of bike racks. The South Miami and University metro stations are within walking distance and this area is also served by Miami-Dade County bus routes.

**b. *Promote high-quality development or redevelopment in an area that is experiencing declining or flat property values.*** The low-rise, low density residential use on the Property currently is older and lacks amenities and upgraded infrastructure. Shoma Park Tower will be new and will feature an attractive mix of uses in a well-designed building, with a number of on-site amenities. The Project represents a substantial new investment in the neighborhood which should help revitalize the area and attract City residents who enjoy amenities such as employment centers, parks, restaurants and shopping within steps of their homes.

**c. *Create affordable housing opportunities for people who live or work in the City of Coral Gables.*** Not applicable to this request.

**d. *Implement specific objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.*** The Project will be consistent and not directly conflict with the goals, objectives or policies of the

Comprehensive Plan. Shoma Park Tower will strengthen and enhance the City as a vibrant community with a mix of uses including residential, office and commercial (Goal FLU-1). The Project is being designed as a residential mid-rise tower with first floor active uses including a fitness and spa area and commercial/retail/restaurant space. Being across the street from Riviera Park creates a "Central Park" feel and provides neighbors, residents and visitors with a desirable place to work, live and play. Shoma Park Tower will also create an infill redevelopment project which will discourage urban sprawl and encourage the reuse of underutilized parcels (Objective FLU-1.7). The project will replace an older, underutilized residential apartment building with a beautiful Mediterranean designed mixed use development close to employment centers, shopping and recreational parks. Shoma Park Tower's high quality, creative design and compatible site planning will bring new energy and excitement to this area of the City while reaffirming George Merrick's original vision for Coral Gables' design, look and lifestyle (Objective DES-1.1). The Project promotes mixed use development providing housing and commercial services near employment centers, thereby reducing the need to drive (Policy MOB 1.1.1). Shoma Park Tower is less than a block away from a Whole Foods grocery store, steps away from Riviera Park and a few blocks away from the City's commercial uses and Sunset Place, a large commercial mixed use entertainment and shopping facility. With its generous sidewalks, large setbacks and covered arcades along Venera Avenue and Yumuri Street, the active pedestrian experience around the project encourages walking instead of driving. Shoma Park Tower contains a balance of mixed uses, housing and open space, which will promote pedestrian activity and provide for specific commitments to design excellence and long term economic and cultural vitality.

**3. Will not cause a substantial diminution of the market value of adjacent property or materially diminish the suitability of adjacent property for its existing or approved use.**

A new, attractive project should add to the value of the neighborhood rather than diminishing property values. Shoma Park Tower represents a substantial investment in this neighborhood with enhanced infrastructure including large sidewalks and public amenities creating an enjoyable and walkable neighborhood close to employment centers, parks and commercial areas.

**MIXED USE / CONDITIONAL USE STANDARDS**

The approval sought in this Planning application is for a mixed use residential building. Such buildings are permitted in Commercial zoning districts as conditional uses. Section 4-302 of the Zoning Code, Commercial District (C), provides for the approval of mixed use buildings in Commercial districts as conditional uses. The Application complies with the conditional use provisions as follows:



**1. The proposed conditional use is consistent with and furthers the goals, policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and furthers the purposes of these regulations and other City ordinances and actions designed to implement the Plan.**

The proposed conditional use is for a mixed use building in the Commercial zoning district. Mixed use buildings including residential uses are consistent with Policy FLU 1.1.3, especially Table FLU-2, Commercial Land Uses, of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, other Comprehensive Plan policies are furthered or effectuated by this Project, as described above in this narrative.

**2. The available use to which the property may be put is appropriate to the property that is subject to the proposed conditional use and compatible with existing and planned uses in the area.**

The proposed Project is a mixed use, primarily residential building. Other uses and structures in the vicinity contain a mix of commercial, residential and office uses and there is a large, municipal park located to the east of the Property. The Property is currently a residential use. To the north, west and south are numerous mid and high rise structures. The Project will be consistent with the pattern of existing buildings and uses in the area, including such buildings as the Plaza San Remo directly to the west.

**3. The proposed conditional use does not conflict with the needs and character of the neighborhood and the City.**

As noted above, the character of the area consists of mixed uses in mostly mid and high rise buildings. The proposed Shoma Park Tower mixed use project will not conflict with the needs and character of this neighborhood and will in fact, bring new life to the area by providing more residential uses with the new residents tending to patronize nearby businesses and offices.

**4. The proposed conditional use will not adversely or unreasonably affect the use of other property in the area.**

The Project will not adversely affect other property in the area. On the contrary, a new upscale residential tower should have a positive effect on its surroundings. The Property lies in an area of the City which is a transition zone between taller commercial and mixed uses to the north, northwest, west, and south and the residential neighborhoods to the east.

**5. The proposed use is compatible with the nature, condition and development of adjacent uses, buildings and structures and will not adversely affect the adjacent uses, buildings or structures.**

The nature of the surrounding area is a mix of residential, commercial and office uses, generally in mid rise and high rise buildings. The Property today is one of the last low rise (two story) buildings in a part of the City that is a transition zone between lower residential uses and high rise mixed uses. The redevelopment of the Property will bring many more residents and some new commercial uses to this area and will upgrade this site and neighborhood significantly. All of these factors should be beneficial to adjacent uses.

**6. The parcel proposed for development is adequate in size and shape to accommodate all development features.**

The Property is over half an acre in size and its shape and location lend themselves to the design of a residential tower. The site exceeds the code-required minimum property development regulations for mixed use buildings. The site has two prominent street frontages (Venera Avenue and Yumuri Street) and lies across Yumuri Street from Riviera Park. Shoma Park Tower will create a "Central Park-like" feel in the neighborhood with commercial uses fronting the Park and generous sidewalks to activate the pedestrian activity in the area. The Property is well suited to the proposed development.

**7. The nature of the proposed development is not detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the community.**

The nature of the Project will be primarily residential and also contain commercial and office uses on the ground floor. The building will be designed to engage the street by providing inviting landscaping, attractive sidewalks, an arcade and ground floor uses open to the public on the first level. These amenities are not currently in place and therefore, the Project will be a great improvement for the community.

**8. The design of the proposed driveways, circulation patterns and parking is well defined to promote vehicular and pedestrian circulation.**

All vehicular circulation will take place on and from the north side of the building. Public pedestrian circulation will occur on the north and east sides. Parking will be interior to the building, as will loading and trash functions. Thus circulation has been carefully considered by the building's designers.

**9. The proposed conditional use satisfies the concurrency standards of Article 3, Division 13 and will not adversely burden public facilities, including the traffic-carrying capacities of streets, in an unreasonable or disproportionate manner.**

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Planning and Zoning Director  
City of Coral Gables  
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A concurrency impact statement was submitted and a sufficiency finding has been made as part of the earlier DRC review of this Project.

We look forward to your review of Shoma Park Tower's Application. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,



Mario Garcia-Serra

Enclosures

cc: Heidi Davis Knapik, Esq.  
James Norquest

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